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LETTER DATED 16 JULY 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to submit, enclosed herewith, a letter by the President of the Republic of Croatia, Dr. Franjo Tudjman, addressed to you.

I would be grateful if you would provide for the distribution of this letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mario NOBILO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 16 July 1993 from the President of the Republic of Croatia addressed to the President of the Security Council

At its 16th session the Defense and National Security Council of the Republic of Croatia discussed the situation in connection with the opening of the Maslenica Bridge and Zadar Airport, and the pressures brought to bear against Croatia because of its intention to open these facilities, and because of responsibility for the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In this regard the position of the Republic of Croatia is as follows:

1. Croatia is reinstating traffic across the Maslenica Bridge through the Zadar Airport in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the Vance Plan, because this is of vital importance, in economic terms, for Southern Croatia, as well as for the delivery of humanitarian aid not only to Dalmatia, but to Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. After the destruction of the Maslenica Bridge all the traffic has been handled by ferries and across the Pag Bridge which according to experts' findings, its technical condition is such that it prevents all truck traffic. This is one more reason why traffic must be rerouted without delay across the new pontoon Maslenica Bridge.

Let us point out that the reinstating of traffic is not a military provocation but a peaceful civilian emergency action, and that it is being taken after the failure of all attempts at direct and indirect negotiations with the local Serbs with the assistance of the representatives of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and UNPROFOR. Indeed, this is an opportunity to demonstrate good intentions, and to discontinue the foot-dragging tactics practised in the negotiations by the Serbian side, which are contrary to the spirit and to the letter of the Vance Plan and of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.

In view of the foregoing, we urge the international community and the UNPROFOR Command to provide - on the basis of the general recognition of the legitimacy and justifiability of our requests (which has not been challenged either by the latest Report of the President of the United Nations Security Council) - all the required cooperation for the establishment of traffic, this being of vital importance for Croatia, and to bring pressure to bear upon the insurgent Serbs to refrain from all military actions against the Maslenica Bridge which is exclusively a civilian, economic and humanitarian facility.

We reject most vigorously that part of the letter of the United Nations Secretary-General which might warrant the conclusion that agreement is expected not only of the local Serbs but also of another state (the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) for any activity undertaken by the legitimate Croatian authorities within the internationally recognized borders of the Republic of Croatia, including the establishment of traffic across the Maslenica Bridge.

2. The Council considers the pressures and threats against Croatia because of the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be unfounded for the following reasons:

(a) Croatia was the first to recognize the integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and continues to recognize Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent state.

(b) There have been no agreements whatsoever on the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Croatia and Serbia.

(c) In the quest for a solution, Croatia has always shown a high degree of cooperation with the Co-Chairmen of the ICFY. Croatia will support any solution accepted by all the three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

(d) Croatia endorses the principle of independence and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We believe that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be brought to an end on the basis of an agreement on the arrangement of that state as a composite, federal tripartite state of the three constituent nations.

(e) There are no regular units of the Croatian Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, except in borderland areas pursuant to Article 8 of the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation between the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republic of Croatia signed on 21 July 1992. The HVO (Croatian Defence Council) units have been joined by individuals, former members of the Croatian Armed Forces natives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who had joined, as volunteers, the Croatian Armed Forces during the Serbian aggression against Croatia in order to defend the Republic of Croatia, and have now returned to defend their century-old homes.

(f) The best proof of this position of the Republic of Croatia is to be found in the proposal previously made by Croatia and repeated on this occasion, that UNPROFOR should implement effective control of borders both between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the entire border and not only the border along the UNPAs.

3. Croatia supports all efforts conducive to an effective and immediate end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the agreement of the three constituent peoples in all matters, in the interest of maintaining Bosnia and Herzegovina and of peace in Europe.

Let us remind you that the Republic of Croatia has had to bear the bulk of the burden of the refugee crisis caused by the Serbian aggression against the Republic of Croatia and, subsequently, against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thus far about 650,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the majority having been Muslims, have crossed the Republic of Croatia en route to other European countries; at present, the Republic of Croatia is providing relief to more than 250,000 displaced persons from the occupied areas of Croatia, and for more than 280,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, about 196,000 of the latter (according to estimates) being Muslims.

As a result of Serbian aggression, more than 200,000 Croats have been expelled from Bosnia and Herzegovina; 40,000 Croats have been expelled, an additional 100,000 still being in danger, as a result of Muslim aggression against the HVO in Central Bosnia.

4. Croatia has always and consistently been prepared, and will continue to be prepared, within the scope of the ICFY and of the efforts made by the international community, for negotiations on a peaceful and political solution in the UNPAs, and for the normalization of relations with all states that have emerged in the area of the former Yugoslavia, including Serbia and Montenegro (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

President
of the Republic of Croatia

Dr. Franjo Tudjman